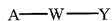


WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A nucleic acid-lipid particle composition for introducing a nucleic acid
2 into a cell, said particle comprising: a cationic lipid, a conjugated lipid that inhibits
3 aggregation of particles, a nucleic acid and an endosomal membrane destabilizer.
- 1 2. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said
2 endosomal membrane destabilizer is outside said nucleic acid-lipid particle.
- 1 3. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said
2 endosomal membrane destabilizer is both outside and inside said nucleic acid-lipid particle.
- 1 4. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said
2 endosomal membrane destabilizer is Ca^{++} ion.
- 1 5. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 4, wherein the
2 concentration of Ca^{++} ion is from about 0.1 mM to about 100 mM.
- 1 6. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 5, wherein the
2 concentration of Ca^{++} ion is from about 1 mM to about 20 mM.
- 1 7. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said
2 particle has a median diameter of less than about 150 nm.
- 1 8. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said
2 cationic lipid is a member selected from the group consisting of N,N-dioleoyl-N,N-
3 dimethylammonium chloride (DODAC), N,N-distearyl-N,N-dimethylammonium bromide
4 (DDAB), N-(1-(2,3-dioleoyloxy)propyl)-N,N,N-trimethylammonium chloride (DOTAP), N-
5 (1-(2,3-dioleoyloxy)propyl)-N,N,N-trimethylammonium chloride (DOTMA), and N,N-
6 dimethyl-2,3-dioleoyloxy)propylamine (DODMA), and combinations thereof.
- 1 9. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said
2 particle further comprises an additional noncationic lipid.
- 1 10. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 9, wherein said
2 noncationic lipid is selected from the group consisting of DOPE, POPC, and EPC.

11. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said particle comprises a functional group that facilitates Ca^{++} ion chelation.

12. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 1, wherein said conjugated lipid that inhibits aggregation of particles has the formula



I

wherein: A is a lipid moiety;
W is a hydrophilic polymer; and
Y is a polycationic moiety.

13. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 12, wherein W is a polymer selected from the group consisting of PEG, polyamide, polylactic acid, polyglycolic acid, polylactic acid/polyglycolic acid copolymers and combinations thereof, said polymer having a molecular weight of about 250 to about 7000 daltons.

14. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 12, wherein Y has at least 4 positive charges at a selected pH.

15. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 12, wherein Y is a member selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine, asparagine, glutamine, derivatives thereof and combinations thereof.

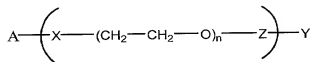
16. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 12, wherein A is a member selected from the group consisting of a diacylglycerol moiety, a dialkylglycerol moiety, a N-N-dialkylamino moiety, a 1,2-diacyloxy-3-aminopropane moiety and a 1,2-dialkyl-3-aminopropane moiety.

17. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 12, wherein W is PEG.

18. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 12, wherein W is a polyamide polymer.

19. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 12, wherein W has a molecular weight of about 250 to about 2000 daltons.

20. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 17, having the general structure of Formula II:



II

wherein

X is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond or a functional group covalently attaching said lipid to at least one ethylene oxide unit;

Z is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond or a functional group covalently attaching said at least one ethylene oxide unit to a cationic group; and

n is an integer having a value of between about 6 to about 50.

21. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 20, wherein

X is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond, phosphatidylethanolamino, phosphatidylethanolamido, phosphoro, phospho, phosphoethanolamino, phosphoethanolamido, carbonyl, carbamate, carboxyl, carbonate, amido, thioamido, oxygen, sulfur and NR, wherein R is a hydrogen or alkyl group.

22. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 20, wherein

Z is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond, phosphatidylethanolamino, phosphatidylethanolamido, phosphoro, phospho, phosphoethanolamino, phosphoethanolamido, carbonyl, carbamate, carboxyl, carbonate, amido, thioamido, oxygen, sulfur and NR, wherein R is a hydrogen or alkyl group.

23. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 20, wherein

A is a diacylglyceroyl moiety;

X is phosphoethanolamido;

Z is NR, wherein R is a hydrogen atom; and

Y is a member selected from the group consisting of about 1 to about 10 basic amino acids or derivatives thereof.

24. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim 23, wherein

A is a diacylglycerol moiety having 2 fatty acyl chains, wherein each acyl chain is independently between 2 and 30 carbons in length and is either saturated or has varying degrees of saturation.

25. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **23**, wherein Y is a member selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine, asparagine, glutamine, derivatives thereof and combinations thereof.

26. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **23**, wherein A is a diacylglycerol moiety having 2 fatty acyl chains, wherein each acyl chain is a saturated C-18 carbon chain; and Y is a cationic group having 4 lysine residues or derivatives thereof.

27. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **1**, wherein said conjugated lipid that inhibits aggregation of particles is a PEG-lipid.

28. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **27**, wherein said PEG-lipid is PEG-ceramide.

29. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **28**, wherein the ceramide of said PEG-ceramide comprises a fatty acid group having about 8 to about 20 carbon atoms.

30. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **28**, wherein said PEG-lipid is PEG-phosphatidylethanolamine.

31. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **1**, wherein said conjugated lipid that inhibits aggregation of particles is an ATTA-lipid.

32. The nucleic acid-lipid particle composition of claim **1**, wherein said nucleic acid is selected from the group consisting of a plasmid, an antisense oligonucleotide, and a ribozyme.

33. A method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell, said method comprising:
contacting said cell with a nucleic acid-lipid particle composition, said particle comprising a cationic lipid, a conjugated lipid that inhibits aggregation of particles, and a nucleic acid; and an endosomal membrane destabilizer.

1 **34.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said endosomal membrane destabilizer is outside said nucleic acid-lipid particle.

1 **35.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said endosomal membrane destabilizer is Ca^{++} ion.

1 **36.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **35**,
2 wherein the concentration of Ca^{++} ion is from about 0.1 mM to about 100 mM.

1 **37.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **36**,
2 wherein the concentration of Ca^{++} ion is from about 1 mM to about 20 mM.

1 **38.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said particle has a median diameter of less than about 150 nm.

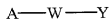
1 **39.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said cationic lipid is a member selected from the group consisting of N,N-dioleyl-
3 N,N-dimethylammonium chloride (DODAC), N,N-distearyl-N,N-dimethylammonium
4 bromide (DDAB), N-(1-(2,3-dioleoyloxy)propyl)-N,N,N-trimethylammonium chloride
5 (DOTAP), N-(1-(2,3-dioleoyloxy)propyl)-N,N,N-trimethylammonium chloride (DOTMA),
6 and N,N-dimethyl-2,3-dioleoyloxy)propylamine (DODMA), and combinations thereof.

1 **40.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said particle further comprises an additional noncationic lipid.

1 **41.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **40**,
2 wherein said noncationic lipid is selected from the group consisting of DOPE, POPC, and
3 EPC.

1 **42.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said particle comprises a functional group that facilitates Ca^{++} ion chelation.

1 **43.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said conjugated lipid that inhibits aggregation of particles has the formula



4 wherein: A is a lipid moiety;
 5 W is a hydrophilic polymer; and
 6 Y is a polycationic moiety.

1 44. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 43,
 2 wherein W is a polymer selected from the group consisting of PEG, polyamide, polylactic
 3 acid, polyglycolic acid, polylactic acid/polyglycolic acid copolymers and combinations
 4 thereof, said polymer having a molecular weight of about 250 to about 7000 daltons.

1 45. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 43,
 2 wherein Y has at least 4 positive charges at a selected pH.

1 46. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 43,
 2 wherein Y is a member selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine, asparagine,
 3 glutamine, derivatives thereof and combinations thereof.

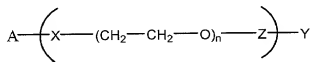
1 47. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 43,
 2 wherein A is a member selected from the group consisting of a diacylglycerol moiety, a
 3 dialkylglycerol moiety, a N-N-dialkylamino moiety, a 1,2-diacyloxy-3-aminopropane
 4 moiety and a 1,2-dialkyl-3-aminopropane moiety.

1 48. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 43,
 2 wherein W is PEG.

1 49. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 43,
 2 wherein W is a polyamide polymer.

1 50. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 43,
 2 wherein W has a molecular weight of about 250 to about 2000 daltons.

1 51. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim 48,
 2 having the general structure of Formula II:



II

3
 4 wherein

X is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond or a functional group covalently attaching said lipid to at least one ethylene oxide unit;
Z is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond or a functional group covalently attaching said at least one ethylene oxide unit to a cationic group;
and
n is an integer having a value of between about 6 to about 50.

52. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **51**,
wherein

X is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond, phosphatidylethanolamino, phosphatidylethanolamido, phosphoro, phospho, phosphoethanolamino, phosphoethanolamido, carbonyl, carbamate, carboxyl, carbonate, amido, thioamido, oxygen, sulfur and NR, wherein R is a hydrogen or alkyl group.

53. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **51**,
wherein

Z is a member selected from the group consisting of a single bond, phosphatidylethanolamino, phosphatidylethanolamido, phosphoro, phospho, phosphoethanolamino, phosphoethanolamido, carbonyl, carbamate, carboxyl, carbonate, amido, thioamido, oxygen, sulfur and NR, wherein R is a hydrogen or alkyl group.

54. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **51**,
wherein

A is a diacylglycerolyl moiety;
X is phosphoethanolamido;
Z is NR, wherein R is a hydrogen atom; and
Y is a member selected from the group consisting of about 1 to about 10 basic amino acids or derivatives thereof.

55. The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **54**,
wherein

A is a diacylglycerolyl moiety having 2 fatty acyl chains, wherein each acyl chain is independently between 2 and 30 carbons in length and is either saturated or has varying degrees of saturation.

1 **56.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **54**,
2 wherein

3 Y is a member selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine,
4 asparagine, glutamine, derivatives thereof and combinations thereof.

1 **57.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **54**,
2 wherein

3 A is a diacylglycerol moiety having 2 fatty acyl chains, wherein each acyl
4 chain is a saturated C-18 carbon chain; and

5 Y is a cationic group having 4 lysine residues or derivatives thereof.

1 **58.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said conjugated lipid that inhibits aggregation of particles is a PEG-lipid.

1 **59.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **58**,
2 wherein said PEG-lipid is PEG-ceramide.

1 **60.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **59**,
2 wherein the ceramide of said PEG-ceramide comprises a fatty acid group having about 8 to
3 about 20 carbon atoms.

1 **61.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **59**,
2 wherein said PEG-lipid is PEG-phosphatidylethanolamine.

1 **62.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said conjugated lipid that inhibits aggregation of particles is an ATTA-lipid.

1 **63.** The method of introducing a nucleic acid into a cell of claim **33**,
2 wherein said nucleic acid is selected from the group consisting of a plasmid, an antisense
3 oligonucleotide, and a ribozyme.

1 **64.** A method for inducing H_{II} phase structure in a lipid bilayer, said
2 method comprising: contacting said lipid bilayer with an endosomal membrane destabilizer,
3 thereby inducing H_{II} phase structure in a lipid bilayer.

1 **65.** The method for inducing H_{II} phase structure of claim **64**, wherein said
2 lipid bilayer comprises DOPC:DOPE:DOPS:Chol.

1 **66.** The method for inducing H_{II} phase structure of claim **64**, wherein said
2 endosomal membrane destabilizer is Ca⁺⁺ ion.

1 **67.** The method for inducing H_{II} phase structure of claim **66**, wherein Ca⁺⁺
2 ion acts in concert with low levels of the cationic lipid to trigger H_{II} phase formation.

1 **68.** Use of nucleic acid-lipid particle composition for introducing a nucleic
2 acid into a cell, said particle comprising: a cationic lipid, a conjugated lipid that inhibits
3 aggregation of particles, a nucleic acid and an endosomal membrane destabilizer.